اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer

Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 80 Abasa (He Frowned)

سُوْرَةُ عَبَسَ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلّٰى ۝١

(80-1) He frowned and turned away

اَنْ جَآءَهُ الْاَعْمٰى ۝٢

(80-2) that the blind man came to him. (1)

(1) The style of this first sentence is elegant and subtle. Although in the following sentences the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been directly addressed, which by itself shows that the act of frowning and turning aside had issued forth from him, the discourse has been opened in a manner as though it was not him but someone else who had so acted. By this style the Prophet (peace be upon him), by a subtle method, has been made to realize that it was an act unseemly for him. Had somebody familiar with his high morals witnessed it, he would have thought that it was not him but some other person who had behaved in that manner.

The blind man referred to here implies, as we have explained in the Introduction, the well-known companion, Ibn Umm Maktum. Hafiz Ibn Abdul Barr in Al-Istiab and Hafiz Ibn Hajar in Al-Isbah have stated that he was a first cousin of the Prophet’s wife, Khadijah. His mother, Umm Maktum, and Khadijah’s father, Khuwailid, were sister and brother to each other. After one knows his relationship with the Prophet (peace be upon him), there remains no room for the doubt that he had turned away from him regarding him as a poor man having a low station in life, and attended to the high-placed people, for he was the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) brother-in-law and a man of noble birth. The reason why the Prophet (peace be upon him) had shown disregard for him is indicated by the word aama (blind man),

which Allah Himself has used as the cause of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) inattention. That is, the Prophet (peace be upon him) thought that even if a single man from among the people whom he was trying to bring to the right path, listened to him and was rightly guided, be could become a powerful means of strengthening Islam. On the contrary, Ibn Umm Maktum was a blind man, who could not prove to be so useful for Islam because of his disability as could one of the Quraish elders on becoming a Muslim. Therefore, he should not interrupt the conversation at that time; whatever he wanted to ask or learn, he could ask or learn at some later time.

وَ مَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهٗ يَزَّكّٰۤى ۝٣

(80-3) How could you know? Perhaps he would cleanse himself,

اَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الذِّكْرٰى ۝٤

(80-4) or he might be mindful and good counsel might avail him.

اَمَّا مَنِ اسْتَغْنٰى ۝٥

(80-5) Now he who waxes indifferent,

فَاَنْتَ لَهٗ تَصَدّٰى ۝٦

(80-6) you attend to him,

وَ مَا عَلَيْكَ اَلَّا يَزَّكّٰى ۝٧

(80-7) though you are not to blame if he would not cleanse himself.

وَ اَمَّا مَنْ جَآءَكَ يَسْعٰى ۝٨

(80-8) But he who comes to you running,

وَ ۡوَ يَخۡشٰى٩ۙ

(80-9) and fears (Allah),

١٠ۙ فَاَ نۡتَعَنۡهُ تَلَهّٰى

(80-10) you pay no heed to him. (2)

(2) This is the real point which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had overlooked in the preaching of Islam on that occasion, and for teaching him the same Allah first reproved him on his treatment of Ibn Umm Maktum, and then told him what really deserved to occupy his attention as preacher of the truth and what did not. There is a man whose apparent state clearly shows that he is a seeker after truth: he fears lest he should follow falsehood and invite Allah's wrath; therefore, he comes all the way in search of the knowledge of the true faith. There is another man, whose attitude clearly reflects that he has no desire for the truth; rather on the contrary, he regards himself as self-sufficient, having no desire to be guided to the right way. Between these two kinds of men one should not see whose becoming a Muslim would be of greater use for Islam and whose becoming a believer could not be of any use in its propagation. But one should see as to who was inclined to accept the guidance and reform himself, and who was least interested in this precious bargain. The first kind of man, whether he is blind, lame, crippled or an indigent mendicant, who might apparently seem incapable of rendering any useful service in the propagation of Islam, is in any case a valuable man for the preacher to the truth. To him therefore he should attend, for the real object of this invitation is to reform the people, and the apparent state of the person shows that if he was instructed he would accept guidance. As for the other kind of man, the preacher has no need to pursue him, no matter how influential he is in society. For his attitude and conduct openly proclaim that he has no desire for reform; therefore, any effort made to reform him would be mere waste of time. If he has no desire to reform himself, he may not, the loss would be his, the preacher would not at all be accountable for it.

كَلَّآ إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ ١١

(80-11) No indeed; [3] this is only a Reminder. [4]

(3) That is, you should never do so: do not give undue importance to those who have forgotten God and become proud of their high worldly position. The teaching of Islam is not such that it should be presented solicitously before him who spurns it, nor should a man like you try to invite these arrogant people to Islam in a way as may cause them the misunderstanding that you have a selfish motive connected with them, and that your mission would succeed only if they believed, otherwise not, whereas the fact is that the truth is as self-sufficient of them as they are of the truth.

(4) The allusion is to the Quran.

فَمَن شَآءَ ذَكَرَهُۥ ١٢

(80-12) So whoso wills may give heed to it.

فِى صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ ١٣

(80-13) It is contained in scrolls highly honoured,

مَّرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍۭ ١٤

(80-14) most exalted and purified, [5]

(5) Purified: free from all kinds of mixtures of false ideas and thoughts, and presenting nothing but the pure truth. There is no tinge whatever in these scrolls of the impurities with which the other religious books of the world have been polluted. They have been kept pure and secure from all kinds of human speculation and evil suggestions.

بِأَيْدِى سَفَرَةٍ ١٥

(80-15) borne by the hands of scribes,

كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾

(80-16) noble [6] and purified. [7]

[6] This refers to the angels who were writing the scrolls of the Quran under the direct guidance of Allah, were guarding them and conveying them intact to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Two words have been used to qualify them: karim, i.e. noble, and barara, i.e. virtuous. The first word is meant to say that they are so honored and noble that it is not possible that such exalted beings would commit even the slightest dishonesty in the trust reposed in them. The second word has been used to tell that they carry out the responsibility entrusted to them of writing down the scrolls, guarding them and conveying them to the Messenger with perfect honesty and integrity.

[7] If the context in which these verses occur, is considered deeply, it becomes obvious that here the Quran has not been praised for the sake of its greatness and glory but to tell the arrogant people, who were repudiating its message with contempt, plainly: The glorious Quran is too holy and exalted a Book to be presented before you humbly with the request that you may kindly accept it if you so please. For it does not stand in need of you as you stand in need of it. If you really seek your well-being, you should clear your head of the evil thoughts and submit to its message humbly; otherwise you are not so self-sufficient of this Book as this Book is self-sufficient of you. Your treating it with scorn and contempt will not affect its glory and greatness at all, rather your own pride and arrogance will be ruined on account of it.

قُتِلَ الْاِنْسٰنُ مَآ اَكْفَرَهٗ ﴿١٧﴾

(80-17) Accursed [8] be man! [9] How stubbornly he denies the Truth.

(8) From here the rebuke turns directly against the disbelievers, who were treating the message of the truth with scant attention. Before this, from the beginning of the Surah to verse 16, the address though apparently directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), was actually meant to reprimand the disbelievers, as if to say: O Prophet (peace be upon him), why are you ignoring a seeker after truth and paying all your attention to those who are worthless from your mission's point of view? They do not deserve that a great Prophet like you should present a sublime thing like the Quran before them.

(9) At all such places in the Quran, man does not imply every individual of the human race but the people whose evil traits of character are intended to be censured. At some places the word man is used because the evil traits are found in most of human beings, and at others for the reason that if the particular people are pin-pointed for censure, it engenders stubbornness. Therefore, admonition is given in general terms so as to be more effective. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 65 of Surah Ha Mim As- Sajdah); (E.N. 75 of Surah Ash-Shura).

مِنْ اَیِّ شَیْءٍ خَلَقَهٗ ﴿١٨﴾

(80-18) Out of what did Allah create him?

مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ؕ خَلَقَهٗ فَقَدَّرَهٗ ﴿١٩﴾

(80-19) Out of a sperm-drop (11) did He create him and then determined a measure for him, (12)

(11) That is, let him first consider out of what he was created, where he was nourished and developed, by what way he came into the world, and from what helpless state he began his life in the world. Why does he forget his such beginning and becomes involved in conceit and haughtiness and why does he feel so puffed up as to resist his Creator and stand before Him as an

adversary? (The same theme has been expressed in(Surah Ya Seen, Ayats 77-78).

(12) That is, he was yet developing and taking shape in his mother's womb when his destiny was set for him. It was determined what would be his sex, his color, his size; the extent and volume of his body, the extent to which his limbs would be sound or unsound, his appearance and voice, the degree of physical strength and mental endowments, what would be the land, the family, the conditions and environments in which he would take birth, develop and be molded into a specific person, what would be the hereditary influences and effects of the surroundings and the role and impact of his own self in the make-up of his personality, the part he would play in his life of the world, and how long he would be allowed to function on the earth. He cannot swerve even a hair-breadth from his destiny, nor can effect the slightest alteration in it. Then, how strange is his daring and stubbornness! He commits disbelief of the Creator before Whose destiny he is so helpless and powerless.

ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُ ٢٠

(80-20) and then made the course of life easy for him, (13)

(13) That is, He created all those means and provisions in the world, which he could utilize, otherwise all the capabilities of his body and mind would have remained useless, had not the Creator provided the means and created the possibilities on the earth to employ them. Furthermore, the Creator also gave him the opportunity to choose and adopt for himself whichever of the ways, good or evil, of gratitude or ingratitude, of obedience or disobedience that he pleased. He opened up both the ways before him and made each way smooth and easy so that he could follow any way that he liked.

ثُمَّ اَمَاتَهٗ فَاَقْبَرَهٗ ﴿٢١﴾

(80-21) then He caused him to die and brought him to the grave, (14)

(14) That is, not only in the matter of birth and destiny but also in the matter of death he is absolutely helpless before his Creator. Neither can he take birth by his choice nor die by his choice, nor can defer his death even by a moment. He dies precisely at the appointed time, in the appointed place, under the appointed circumstances that have been decreed for his death, and he is deposited in the type of grave destined for him whether it is the belly of the earth, the depths of the sea, a bonfire or the stomach of a beast. Nothing to say of the man. The whole world together cannot change the Creator’s decree in respect of any person.

ثُمَّ اِذَا شَآءَ اَنْشَرَهٗ ﴿٢٢﴾

(80-22) and then, whenever He wishes, He will raise him back to life. (15)

(15) That is, he does not either have the power to refuse to rise up when the Creator may will to resurrect him after death. When he was first created, he was not consulted: he was not asked whether he wanted to be created or not. Even if he had refused, he would have been created. Likewise, his resurrection is also not dependent upon his will and assent that he may rise from death if he so likes, or refuse to rise if he does not like. In this matter, he is also absolutely helpless before the Creator's will. Whenever He wills, He will resurrect him, and he will have to rise whether he likes it or not.

كَلَّا لَمَّا يَقْضِ مَآ اَمَرَهٗ ﴿٢٣﴾

(80-23) Nay, but man did not fulfil what Allah had enjoined upon him. [16]

(16) He commanded him: Implies the duty that Allah has enjoined on every man in the form of natural guidance as well as the duty to which man's own existence and every particle of the universe, from the earth to the heavens, and every manifestation of divine power are pointing, and also that duty which Allah has conveyed in every age through His Prophets and Books and disseminated through the righteous people of every period. (For explanation, see(E.N. 5 of Surah Ad-Dahr). In the present context the object is to express the meaning that on the basis of the truths stated in the above verses, it was man's duty to have obeyed his Creator, but, contrary to this, he adopted the way of disobedience and did not fulfill the demand of his being His creature.

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْاِنْسٰنُ اِلٰى طَعَامِهٖٓ ﴿٢٤﴾

(80-24) So let man just consider his food: [17]

(17) That is, let him consider the food, which he regards as an ordinary thing, how it is created. Had God not provided the means for it, it was not in the power of man himself to have created the food on the earth in any way.

اَنَّا صَبَبْنَا الْمَآءَ صَبًّا ﴿٢٥﴾

(80-25) We poured water, pouring it in great abundance, [18]

(18) This refers to rainwater. Water vapors are raised in vast quantities from the oceans by the heat of the sun, then they are turned into thick clouds, then the winds blow and spread them over different parts of the earth, then because of the coolness in the upper atmosphere the vapors turn back to water and fall as rain in every area in a particular measure. The water not only falls

as rain directly on the earth but also collects underground in the shape of wells and fountains, flows in the form of rivers and streams, freezes on the mountains as snow and melts and flows into rivers in other seasons as well than the rainy season. Has man himself made all these arrangements? Had his Creator not arranged this for his sustenance, could man survive on the earth.

ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْاَرْضَ شَقًّا ﴿٢٦﴾

(80-26) and cleaved the earth, cleaving it asunder; (19)

(19) Then We split the earth in clefts: Implies cleaving it in a way that the seeds, or seed-stones, or vegetable seedlings that man sows or plants in it, or which are deposited in it by winds or birds, or by some other means, should sprout up. Man can do nothing more than to dig the soil, or plough it, and bury in it the seeds that God has already created. Beyond this everything is done by God. It is He Who has created the seeds of countless species of vegetable; it is He Who has endowed these seeds with the quality that when they are sown in the soil, they should sprout up and from every seed, vegetable of its own particular species should grow. Again it is He Who has created in the earth the capability that in combination with water it should break open the seeds and develop and nourish every species of vegetable with the kind of food suitable for it. Had God not created the seeds with these qualities and the upper layers of the earth with these capabilities, man could not by himself have arranged any kind of food on the earth.

فَاَ نۢ بَتْنَا فِيْهَا حَبًّا ﴿٢٧﴾

(80-27) then caused the grain to grow out of it,

وَّ عِنَبًا وَّ قَضْبًا ﴿٢٨﴾

(80-28) together with grapes and vegetables,

وَّ زَيۡتُوۡنًا وَّ نَخۡلًا ﴿۲۹﴾

(80-29) and olives and palms,

وَّ حَدَآئِقَ غُلۡبًا ﴿۳۰﴾

(80-30) and dense orchards,

وَّ فٰكِهَةً وَّ اَبًّا ۙ ﴿۳۱﴾

(80-31) and fruits and pastures –

مَّتٰعًا لَّكُمْ وَ لِاَنْعٰمِكُمْ ؕ ۳۲

(80-32) all this as a provision for you and your cattle. (20)

(20) That is, a means of sustenance not only for you but also for those animals from which you obtain items of food like meat, fat, milk, butter, etc. and which also perform countless other services for your living. You benefit by all this and yet you disbelieve in God Whose provisions sustain you.

فَاِذَا جَآءَتِ الصَّآخَّةُ ۳۳

(80-33) But when the deafening cry shall be sounded (21)

(21) The final terrible sounding of the Trumpet at which all dead men shall be resurrected to life.

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ اَخِيْهِ ۳۴

(80-34) on the Day when each man shall flee from his brother,

وَ اُمِّهٖ وَ اَبِيْهِ ۳۵

(80-35) and his mother and his father;

وَ صٰحِبَتِهٖ وَ بَنِيهِ ۝٣٦

(80-36) and his consort and his children; (22)

(22) A theme closely resembling to this has already occurred in Surah Al-Maarij, Ayats 10-14. Fleeing may also mean that when he sees those nearest and dearest to him in the world, involved in distress, instead of rushing forth to help them, he will run away from them lest they should call out to him for help. And it may also mean that when they see the evil consequences of committing sin for the sake of one another and misleading one another, fearless of God and heedless of the Hereafter, in the world, each one would flee from the other lest the other should hold him responsible for his deviation and sin. Brother will fear brother, children their parents, husband his wife, and parents their children lest they should become witnesses in the case against them.

لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَاْنٌ يُّغْنِيهِ ۝٣٧

(80-37) on that Day each will be occupied with his own business, making him oblivious of all save himself. (23)

(23) A tradition has been reported in the Hadith by different methods and through different channels, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: On the Day of Resurrection all men will rise up naked. One of his wives (according to some reporters, Aishah, according to others, Saudah, or a woman) asked in bewilderment: O Messenger of Allah, shall we (women) appear naked on that Day before the people. The prophet (peace be upon him) recited this very verse and explained that on that Day each one will have enough of his own troubles to occupy him, and will be wholly unmindful of others. (Nasai, Tirmidhi, Ibn Abi Hatim,)

وُجُوهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ ۝٣٨

(80-38) Some faces on that Day shall be beaming with happiness,

ضَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

(80-39) and be cheerful and joyous.

وَ وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

(80-40) Some faces on that Day shall be dust-ridden,

تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ ﴿٤١﴾

(80-41) enveloped by darkness.

أُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَفَرَةُ الْفَجَرَةُ ﴿٤٢﴾

(80-42) These will be the unbelievers, the wicked.